

# **Rhode Island Emergency Management Advisory Council**

## **Meeting Notice**

**THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL WILL BE HELD:**

**January 27, 2009**

**10:00 AM**

**Room 313, State House**

**Providence, Rhode Island**

## **AGENDA**

### **I. Call to Order/Attendance**

**Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth H. Roberts**

**Major General Robert Bray**

**RIEMA Director David Smith**

**Kate McCarthy-Barnett                  Robert Pasapane**

**Steven Florio    Christine West**

**Alysia Mihalakos    Joseph D. Baker**

**William Gasbarro    Dawn Lewis**

**Steve Preston    Carol Kent**

**Michael McDonough    Tom Walsh**

**Robert Howe    James Ball**

**Ken Smith    Jim Swanberg**

**Raymond Perry                  Erin Lambie**

**James Celenza    James Lanni**

**William Mullen                  Ryan Whitehead**

**Nancy Smith Greer   Vincent Marzullo**

**Vladimir Ibarra**

**Meeting was called to order at 10:03 am.**

## **II. Approval of minutes from December 2, 2008**

**The minutes from the December 2nd meeting were unanimously approved.**

### **Comments from the Chair:**

**With regards to the Winter Storm Response the Lieutenant Governor mentioned that this will always be a dilemma: if you are over-prepared people will make comments and if you fail to react briskly people will levy criticisms. However, in spite of this perennial dilemma there has definitely been progress and there is a better sense of community preparation and collaboration. It seems that collaboration has been enhanced and it has become a focus in local governments. The Lt Governor once again commended members for answering the survey questions and noticed that there are various activities that the full council should know about. Therefore, our office is willing to play a part in providing a place where its members can post their upcoming events. We will host a calendar on our website for subcommittee members to send in information regarding upcoming training and events.**

### **III. Domestic Preparedness Subcommittee reports**

#### **A. Situational Awareness Working Group—Director David Smith, RIEMA Chair**

**Director Smith suggested the suspension of the Situational Awareness Group until further notice. This recommendation is based on the emerging consensus that Situational Awareness means reaching out to non-traditional partners and the existing subcommittee work seems to be effectively encompassing most of this. Therefore, since this group was created as a suggestion from members and hearing no objections to its suspension, reporting on this topic will be incorporated as part of the other subcommittee groups' feedback.**

#### **B. Haz Mat/Decon Technical Working Group— Steve Preston, Woonsocket FD**

**The group has been active although it has experienced some difficulties in maintaining classes due to funding levels. The group has been working with the FBI to meet the national standards as well as with Director Smith to maintain the Fire Academy. Mr. Preston brought up a current challenge with regards to legislation as some of the assets stem from volunteer communities. The concern relates to immunities in Chapter 19.8 of Title 23 to certain persons and organizations that engage in oil spill and hazardous material pollution prevention activities. Through a collaboration between Director**

**Smith, the State Legal Department and the Fire Chiefs Association, legislation has been submitted to address this issue. Mr. Preston mentioned that the reimbursement problems have subsided and fortunately he has been able to receive the allocated moneys.**

### **C. Communications Working Group— Director David Smith, RIEMA Chair**

**The group has been meeting on the first Tuesday and third Thursday of the month to accommodate the Fire Chiefs meeting. The group has been focusing not just on RISCON but also on governance, training, standard operating guidelines, alert technology, patient tracking development, and asset tracking through WebOC.**

**Director Smith considers our state to be far ahead in interoperability infrastructure and technology when compared to most states in the region. However, as it relates to legislative efforts to provide authority and continuity of government we do not seem to take a similarly leading position.**

**Excavations continue throughout the State at different sites including Coventry, East Greenwich, North Smithfield and Cumberland. After the completion of these towers the system will be at full strength.**

**Lieutenant Governor Roberts raised a question about the impact of the television digital conversion slated for February 17th since 2.5 million Americans are still not ready. She queried whether we have a sense of how many Rhode Islanders are in that situation? Director Smith, stated that although our state does not have interference issues, people without the converter box would not be able to receive**

emergency alerts. Furthermore, it seems that Congress is trying to postpone the deadline date since many citizens were unable to receive the vouchers. The scope of the impact of this voucher problem is still unknown. Lastly, Director Smith discussed the trend towards regionalization of services and technologies so that systems are compatible and cited the work with neighboring states (Massachusetts and Connecticut).

#### **D. Volunteer/Citizens' Corps Council—Vin Marzullo**

Mr. Marzullo discussed some of the challenges he has been encountering in meeting with members. There seemed to be an issue with the appointment and expiration of members appointed for a one year term and their expiration date in August and September. Mr. Marzullo, attended the press conference on the merger of the Volunteer Center of Rhode Island and Serve Rhode Island and would like to incorporate the work and efforts of this newly merged entity into our subcommittee group. He sees the merger as a great opportunity to not only expand membership but also to increase resources. Mr. Marzullo has been looking at different state models to try to improve our current infrastructure, including New Hampshire, Texas and California. He provided an example of how Governor Schwarzenegger promoted citizen corps through volunteer entities. Lastly, Mr. Marzullo highlighted the work of Providence College and their CERT team and how they have become a role model for higher education efforts across the campus compact.

**E. Hospital Preparedness Working Group— Alysia Mihalakos, DOH/Dawn Lewis, HARI**

**The Hospital Preparedness Working group continues to focus on the patient tracking system. The group, in collaboration with the communications group, has been working on the resource tracking system which will benefit hospitals immensely. There was good news as we were informed that Rhode Island is number one in New England and eighth in the nation when it comes to preparedness for pandemic flu. However, our state scored as one of the lowest for preparedness in continuity of government and personnel policies. On March 20th there will be a full-scale exercise. The exercise will involve a bioterrorism agent and will be performed in conjunction with the CDC. The name of the exercise will be Operation Big Green since it falls around St. Patrick's Day. Lastly, the group has been focusing on the credentialing system (Providence has a system) and is currently looking at different players to add to the mix.**

**F. Behavioral Health Disaster Response Network Working Group—Carol Kent, MHRH**

**The group continues its focus on training and the completion of the Rhode Island Family Assistance Center Plan. So far there are 28 recruits and the Psychological First Aid (PFA) course is being offered in 2-hour sessions at Kent County, Roger Williams Hospital and Miriam Hospital. There has been a request by RIEMA for a Family Center Plan after the Station Fire as a resource center for survivors.**

**The group has been looking at transportation issues and the different layers that resolving the transportation challenges will involve.**

#### **G. Port Security—Erin Lambie, USCG**

**The group continues its training and exercise program (AMSTEP)/ (PREP) and continues to meet to plan a tabletop exercise scheduled for summer 2009 as well as a full scale exercise in spring 2010. These exercises will focus on the Port of Providence, incorporation of special teams (i.e. the RI ANG 13th CST), coordination of resources, and communications. The port security grants application process closed Friday. Currently, the Coast Guard will be conducting their review process in February and may ask key state personnel for assistance. The Coast Guard has completed the required update to the Area Maritime Security Plan (AMSP).**

**Captain Ray Perry discussed some of the action directives from Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano instructing specific officers to gather information, review existing strategies and programs and provide reports. Furthermore, Secretary Napolitano issued seven action directives: cybersecurity; northern border strategy; critical infrastructure protection; risk analysis; state and local intelligence sharing; transportation security; and state, local and tribal integration.**

**H. Law Enforcement Working Group—Capt. James Swanberg, RISP**  
Captain Swanberg discussed the T. F. Green incident in which a man was taken into custody after a suspicious item was found in his bag. The incident turned out to be a false alarm however Captain Swanberg reported that he was impressed with the rapid response and preparation of the law enforcement community. Training continues and some of the funding for homeland security has been used to provide shooter training to over 30 officers in Rhode Island. The purpose of the course is to give law enforcement agencies the capability of training their own officers on this topic. The RI WMD Tactical Team will continue its training program to include training with other specialty responder teams including the Decon Subcommittee every three to four months. The Fusion Center goal will be to increase its level of service by seeking additional personnel for the unit.

**I. Special Populations Working Group—Kate McCarthy-Barnett, DOH**  
The Special Populations Workgroup continues its work developing and implementing interventions to integrate emergency preparedness for Rhode Islanders with special needs. Their initiatives are aimed at addressing sheltering, communications, education/training, transportation and outreach relating to the Special Needs Registry. The Subcommittee will meet with the Governor's Commission on Disability Accessibility Committee to review sheltering barriers in older schools since not all older schools meet current accessibility

standards due to "grandfathering" provisions. HEALTH & RIEMA are collaborating to develop and implement the Pandemic Influenza & Special Needs Training Sessions scheduled for September. The sessions are targeted for audiences to include emergency managers, planners and responders, and community leaders. The Special Needs Registry continues to expand and will include a GIS mapping component. The council asked if Pictometry was being used and the answer was no. The suggestion was made that perhaps Ray LaBelle could provide some of the logistics relating to this issue.

**J. Transportation Security Working Group—Brian Pires, ATAC/TSWG**  
The group met with the 13th CST WMD command, RING DOMS, US Coast Guard, ICE, CBP, TSA, Providence Police, DEM Environmental Police and the Naval War College to build a scalable and progressive exercise program for the Port of Providence. The program will beginning with an executive seminar at the Naval War College, progressing to a table top exercise with the US Coast Guard and agency/political leaders in May followed by agency specific functional exercises and culminating in a full scale exercise with NORTHCOM early 2010.

#### **IV. New Business/ Member Comments and/or Suggestion**

There was a brief discussion on supply of materials for snow removal and the impact of snow removal programs in municipalities in light of proposed funding cuts.

**Meeting was adjourned at 11:55 AM**